

CLAIMS

Now, therefore, the following is claimed:

- 1           1.     An apparatus for communicating to customer service representatives in  
2     real-time, comprising:  
3           a communication interface configured to establish a real-time communication  
4     session with a remote communication device;  
5           an input interface configured to receive a request for contacting a customer  
6     service representative, said input interface further configured to receive input data  
7     from a user of said apparatus during said established communication session; and  
8           logic configured to transmit, to said communication interface and in response  
9     to said request, a command signal instructing said communication interface to  
10    establish said real-time communication session, said logic further configured to  
11    transmit, during said real-time communication session, said input data to said remote  
12    communication device via said communication interface,  
13    wherein said apparatus is configured to perform at least one non-telephonic  
14    function and wherein said remote communication device is configured to interface  
15    said input data with a customer service representative, thereby assisting said customer  
16    service representative to diagnose an operational problem associated with said  
17    apparatus in performing said non-telephonic function.
- 1           2.     The apparatus of claim 1, wherein said input data is voice data, and  
2     wherein said input interface includes a microphone configured to detect the user's  
3     speech and to convert said speech into said voice data.

1           3.       The apparatus of claim 1, wherein said logic is configured to retrieve  
2       predefined contact information from memory within said apparatus in response to said  
3       request, said contact information sufficient for enabling said communication interface  
4       to establish said communication session with said remote communication device, said  
5       logic configured to provide said contact information to said communication interface  
6       in response to said request, wherein said communication interface is configured to  
7       utilize said contact information to establish said communication session.

1           4.       The apparatus of claim 1, further comprising:  
2       a lens; and  
3       a conversion mechanism configured to convert light received by said lens into  
4       digital data.

1           5.       The apparatus of claim 1, wherein said logic is further configured to  
2       transmit a product identifier to a routing device via said communication interface.

1           6.       The apparatus of claim 5, wherein said routing device is configured to  
2       select said remote communication device and to communicatively couple said remote  
3       communication device to said communication interface based on said product  
4       identifier.

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1           7.       The apparatus of claim 1, wherein said logic is further configured to  
2       retrieve data from memory within said apparatus and to transmit said retrieved data to  
3       said remote communication device via said communication interface during said real-  
4       time communication session, said retrieved data indicative of an operational state of  
5       said apparatus, wherein said remote communication device is configured to interface  
6       said retrieved data with said customer service representative thereby assisting said  
7       customer service representative to diagnose said operational problem based on said  
8       retrieved data.

1           8.       The apparatus of claim 7, wherein said logic is configured to transmit  
2       said retrieved data to said remote communication device in response to a request  
3       transmitted from said remote communication device.

1           9.       The apparatus of claim 7, wherein said logic is configured to change  
2       said operational state based on commands received from said remote communication  
3       device.

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1           10.     A method, comprising the steps of:  
2           providing an electric apparatus, said electric apparatus configured to perform a  
3     primary function, said primary function other than enabling communication between  
4     said electric apparatus and remote communication devices;  
5           detecting, at said electric apparatus, a request for contacting a customer service  
6     representative;  
7           establishing a real-time communication session between said electric apparatus  
8     and a remote communication device in response to said detecting step; and  
9           enabling a customer service representative at said remote communication  
10    device to diagnose an operational problem associated with said electric apparatus by  
11    transmitting data indicative of said operational problem from said electric apparatus to  
12    said remote communication device during said real-time communication session.

1           11.     The method of claim 10, wherein said data is voice data.

1           12.     The method of claim 10, wherein said electric apparatus includes a  
2     lens, said method further comprising the step of capturing an image via said lens.

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1           13.     The method of claim 10, further comprising the steps of:  
 2           retrieving data from memory within said electric apparatus, said retrieved data  
 3     indicative of an operational state of said electric apparatus; and  
 4           transmitting said retrieved data from said electric apparatus to said remote  
 5     communication device during said communication session.

1           14.     The method of claim 13, wherein said transmitting step is performed in  
 2     response to a command transmitted from said remote communication device.

1           15.     The method of claim 13, further comprising the step of changing said  
 2     operational state based on a command transmitted from said remote communication  
 3     device to said electric apparatus.

1           16.     The method of claim 13, further comprising the step of displaying an  
 2     image of said retrieved data via said remote communication device.

1           17.     The method of claim 13, further comprising the step of diagnosing said  
 2     operational problem based on said retrieved data and said data indicative of said  
 3     operational problem.

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1 18. A method, comprising the steps of:  
2 providing an electric apparatus, said electric apparatus configured to perform  
3 at least one non-telephonic function;  
4 detecting a request for contacting a customer service representative;  
5 establishing a real-time communication session between said electric apparatus  
6 and a remote communication device in response to said detecting step;  
7 inputting data to said electric apparatus during said communication session;  
8 and  
9 transmitting said input data to said remote communication device during said  
10 communication session, thereby assisting a customer service representative at said  
11 remote communication device to diagnose, based on said input data, an operational  
12 problem associated with said electric apparatus in performing said non-telephonic  
13 function.

1 19. The method of claim 18, wherein said input data is voice data and  
2 wherein said inputting step includes the steps of:  
3 detecting speech at said electric apparatus; and  
4 converting said speech into said voice data.

1 20. The method of claim 18, wherein said electric apparatus includes a lens  
2 and wherein said method further comprises the steps of:  
3 receiving light via said lens; and  
4 converting said light into digital data.  
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1           21.     The method of claim 18, wherein said establishing step includes the  
2     steps of:  
3           transmitting a product identifier from said electric apparatus;  
4           selecting said remote communication device based on said product identifier;  
5     and  
6           communicatively coupling said electric apparatus to said remote  
7     communication device based on said selecting step.

1           22.     The method of claim 18, further comprising the steps of:  
2           retrieving data from memory within said electric apparatus, said retrieved data  
3     indicative of an operational state of said electric apparatus; and  
4           transmitting said retrieved data from said electric apparatus to said remote  
5     communication device during said communication session, thereby assisting said  
6     customer service representative at said remote communication device to diagnose,  
7     based on said retrieved data, said operational problem.

1           23.     The method of claim 22, further comprising the step of modifying said  
2     operational state of said electric apparatus based on a command transmitted from said  
3     remote communication device to said electric apparatus.